

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

was to become responsible for the organization of the Iranian army and treasury, and a number of British advisers were to assist in the work of various Iranian government departments. Great Britain undertook to grant Iran a loan of two million pounds, to assist her in the construction of railways, and to support Iran's claim for compensation for war damages perpetrated on her territory by non-British belligerents. A committee of experts was to study the revision of the existing customs tariff. Although it left the fabric of Iranian government and society untouched, the treaty was in fact a thinly disguised instrument for a protectorate. For Curzon, in whose political career Iran played a prominent role, it was a personal triumph.

A month after the conclusion of the treaty, the Foreign Secretary spoke at a dinner offered in honor of Prince Firuz Mirza, Iranian Foreign Minister, who visited London. Said Curzon:

Was it not natural that Persia, seeking to establish and stabilize her future, should turn to us? Our boundaries march with hers for hundreds of miles on her southern frontier. For a century we have pacified and policed the Gulf. At Mesopotamia we shall presently be her neighbor on the West. It is an obvious interest to us to have a peaceful and prosperous Persia; and, as regards Persia herself, if it be true—and I do not think the most ardent Persian patriot will deny it—that external assistance of some sort is necessary for her,—is it not natural that it should be to this country that she should turn?³¹

This, however, proved to be wishful thinking.

The treaty constituted the climax of British influence in Iran, and subsequent developments followed the downward trend of Britain's position there. It is true that Ahmed Shah, while paying a visit to England in the fall of 1919, gave his cordial

approval to the treaty. It is also true that General Dickson and Armitage Smith started to reorganize the army and the treasury in Iran, respectively, and that a group of engineers arrived from England to make surveys for railway construction. But Iranian nationalist circles were deeply dissatisfied with the treaty. The Majlis, the Iranian parliament, never ratified it, and by the spring of 1921 the new Iranian government of Seyyid Zia ed-Din and Reza Khan officially repudiated the treaty.

31 Nicolson, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.